

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: THE CITIZEN'S VOICE IN THE EU

A SHORT GUIDE TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



European Parliament

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PREFACE BY THE PRESIDENT

The European Parliament is made up by you — the citizens of Europe — from all the 28 corners of this Union. This is so, because you have elected 751 Members of the European Parliament. It is thanks to your vote that these Members can change European laws through the amendments which they submit, with you in mind.

I have been entrusted by your elected MEPs to chair and represent the European Parliament for it to be the true advocate of the will and aspirations of the people in Europe. My goal as President is to bring Europe closer to the citizens.

I will do everything I can to ensure that Parliament and its Members become ever more effective in championing your needs and aspirations. The European Union needs to take practical steps to address your concerns in areas

including jobs and growth, security, migration and climate change.

The European Union has been a formidable tool to bring about prosperity and stability. If we look back at our grandparents, we see how a united Europe realised their dream of ending war in Europe. They have seen their children and grandchildren born and raised in a time of peace and respect for fundamental rights.

Europe's policy of increasing harmonisation between its different countries and populations led to amazing economic and political developments, sustaining millions of workers and entrepreneurs through the single market and the dreams of students studying abroad.

Despite these unquestionable successes, however, Europe has not

always found the right response to new challenges, leaving people to question the ability of the EU institutions to address the problems facing them.

So we need to strive to improve the Union, to make it better at doing what it does, in the knowledge that now more than ever before we need to be united in order to protect the interests of EU citizens. Because if we are divided, we will not be able to defend our economic and trade interests, ensure our security and safeguard the environment.

We are ready for this challenge and we are working hard to deliver. Your elected representatives are hard at work considering new and

more effective legislation whenever this is presented by the European Commission, putting pressure on the Commission to act in the interest of the peoples of Europe.

This is a duty we have taken upon our shoulders when you elected us in May 2014, and on which we shall be judged in the upcoming European Elections in 2019.

Your engagement is essential, as it provides the energy to fuel our work as elected representatives. For this reason we require your attention as informed European citizens.

Antonio Tajani

President of the European Parliament

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Tajani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

THE EUROPEAN UNION: WHAT AND WHY

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership comprised of 28 Member States. It was created after the Second World War to foster economic cooperation, the idea being that countries that trade with one another become economically interdependent and thus more likely to avoid conflict. The EU is based on the rule of law: everything that it does is founded on treaties, agreed by all Member States.

The EU remains focused on keeping its institutions transparent and democratic. The European Parliament is a unique multinational parliamentary assembly elected directly by the citizens. The 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) represent over 500 million citizens. European citizens can take part in the political process in a number of ways. For instance, they can vote in elections, contact their MEP, petition the European Parliament or launch a citizen's initiative requesting the European Commission to prepare a legislative proposal.

Petition the European Parliament:

europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00533cec74/Petitions.html

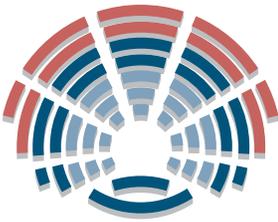
THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



THE EUROPEAN UNION

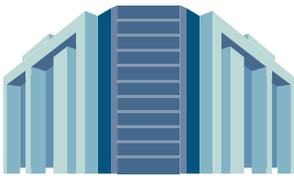
INSTITUTIONS

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN EU INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR FUNCTION



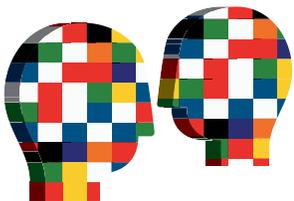
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The only directly elected EU body, this represents the EU's 500 million inhabitants and plays a key role in electing the President of the European Commission. It shares power over the EU budget and legislation with the Council of the European Union.



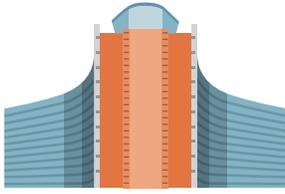
THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The EU's broad priorities are set by the European Council, which brings together national and EU-level leaders. It is led by its president and comprises national Heads of State or Government and the President of the Commission.



THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Council of the European Union represents the governments of the individual Member States. The Presidency of the Council is shared by the Member States on a rotating basis.



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The EU's executive body, it is responsible for proposing and implementing EU laws, monitoring the treaties and the day-to-day running of the EU.



THE COURT OF JUSTICE

The highest court in matters of EU law. It interprets and ensures equal application of EU law across all Member States.



THE COURT OF AUDITORS

The Court of Auditors audits EU finances. As an external auditor, it contributes to improving EU financial management and acts as the independent guardian of the financial interests of EU citizens.



THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

The central bank for Europe's single currency, the euro, its main task is to maintain the euro's purchasing power and thus price stability in the euro area.

Find out more about European institutions and bodies:
europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: ITS POWERS AND ROLES

The European Parliament (EP) is a unique example of multinational and multilingual democracy at work. The elected MEPs engage in public debates and play a crucial role in shaping the policy of the EU. The principal areas of their work include the following.

LAWS

The EP decides jointly with the Council of the EU on laws that affect the daily lives of the European Union's citizens. These include topics such as freedom of travel, food safety and consumer protection, the environment and most sectors of the economy. Member States still have a veto right in areas such as taxation and foreign affairs/defence. Some areas require the Council to

obtain the EP's assent before making a decision. However, even areas where the Member States decide alone — such as education and culture — are often the subject of EU support measures, such as the Erasmus+ programme, which provides young Europeans with opportunities to study, volunteer, train or gain work experience abroad.

Get involved in European policymaking:
europa.eu/eu-law/have-your-say/index_en.htm



IN 2012, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FAMOUSLY REJECTED THE CONTROVERSIAL ANTI-COUNTERFEITING TRADE AGREEMENT (ACTA)

This multinational treaty aimed to establish international standards for enforcing intellectual property rights. However, organisations representing citizens and non-governmental interests argued that ACTA could infringe a number of fundamental rights including freedom of expression and privacy.

Furthermore, the secret negotiation of the agreement excluded civil society groups, developing countries and the general public from the process.

The signature by the EU and many of its Member States resulted in widespread protests across the EU. Following pressure from civil society, which included five petitions, one of which had 2.8 million signatures, the European Parliament carefully scrutinised and finally rejected the agreement.

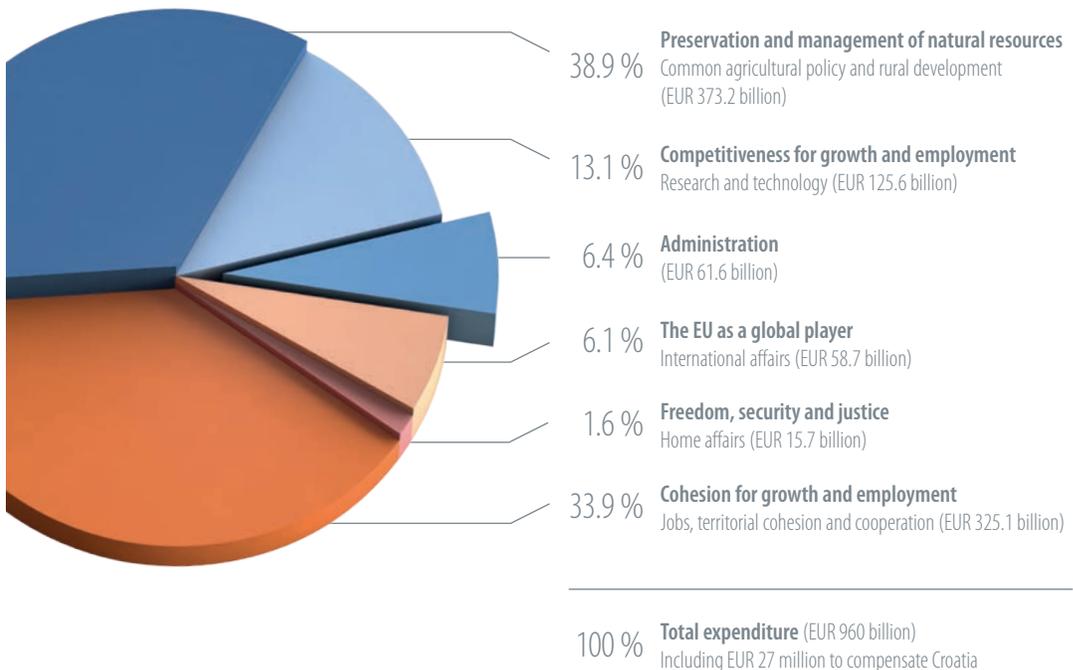
This put an effective end to ACTA and meant that the text could not be adopted by any of the Member States of the EU.

BUDGET

Budgetary powers are the key prerogative of every parliament — whoever allocates the funds has the power to set political priorities. At EU level, this power is shared between the EP and the Council. Together

they adopt a multiannual financial framework every 7 years and scrutinise and approve the annual budget for the next year, as well as the spending from the previous year.

THE EU'S LONG-TERM BUDGET FOR 2014-2020 Expenditure ceilings for 7 years



More on the EU budget:

europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/003dcd4001/The-budget-procedure-explained.html

CONTROL

The EP monitors the correct use of EU funds. The results of EP elections are taken into account in the nomination of the President of the European Commission, but Parliament also has to elect the president and approve the appointment of the Commission (president and College of Commissioners) and can force it to resign. Commissioners are often asked to defend their policies before the Parliament, and the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the

Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy regularly appear in Parliament to brief the MEPs and answer their questions. Over the last couple of years, Parliament has considerably increased the discussions it holds with all leading decision-makers involved with the euro in a bid to shed more light on the way monetary decisions are being taken. In this sense, the EP has become one of the only forums acting to improve the transparency of the governance of the euro area.



More on the EP's powers and procedures:

europa.eu/european_council/aboutparliament/en/007c895f4c/Powers-and-procedures.html

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND ITS DEFENCE OF LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY

As the only elected institution of the EU, Parliament takes its role as a guardian of liberties, human rights and democracy, both in Europe and beyond, very seriously. The task of its members is primarily to represent the citizens at EU level and defend their interests to EU leaders and the institutions of the European Union.

The EP's approval is required for most international agreements concluded by the EU, and Parliament is also involved in shaping the EU's development and humanitarian aid policy. MEPs are increasingly exerting their influence on European foreign policy and maintain close links with lawmakers around the world.

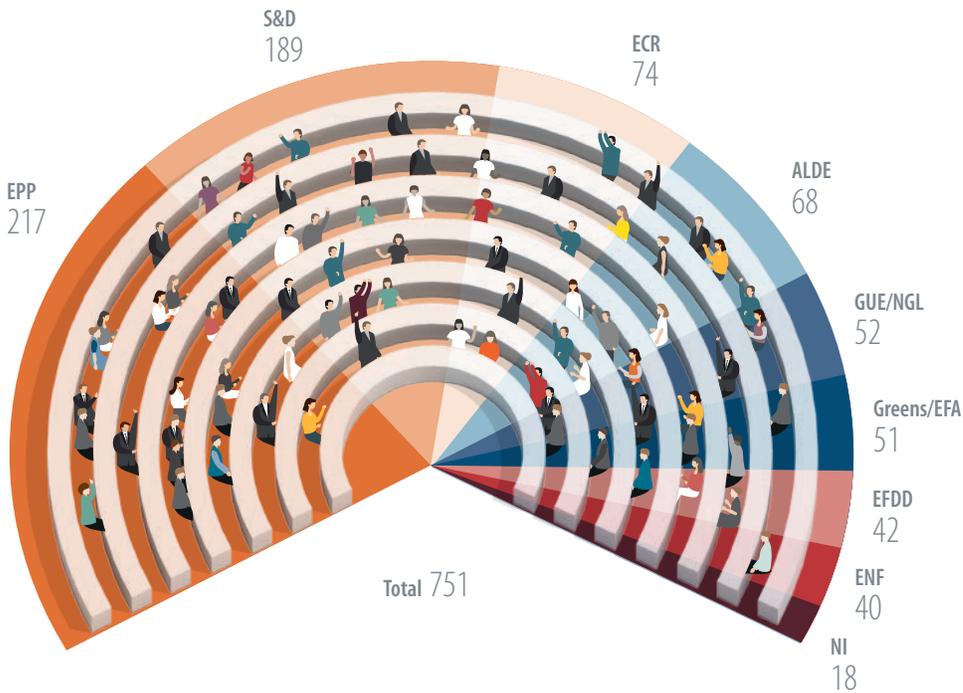
MEPs often act as election observers in countries around the world in order to monitor for irregularities. They ensure that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements and award the Sakharov Prize to honour individuals or organisations that defend human rights, democracy and freedom of expression and combat intolerance and oppression anywhere in the world. Past winners include Malala Yousafzai, Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi.

More on the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize:
europarl.europa.eu/sakharov



THE STRUCTURE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MAKE-UP BY POLITICAL GROUP (23.1.2017)



EPP Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)

S&D Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament

ECR European Conservatives and Reformists Group

ALDE Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

GUE/NGL Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left

Greens/EFA Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

EFDD Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group

ENF Europe of Nations and Freedom

NI Non-attached members

DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS BY POLITICAL
GROUPS AND MEMBER STATES (23.1.2017)



	EPP	S&D	ECR	ALDE	GUE/ NGL	Greens/ EFA	EFDD	ENF	NI	Total
Belgium	4	4	4	6		2		1		21
Bulgaria	7	4	2	4						17
Czech Republic	7	4	2	4	3		1			21
Denmark	1	3	4	3	1	1				13
Germany	34	27	6	4	8	13	1	1	2	96
Estonia	1	1		3		1				6
Ireland	4	1	1	1	4					11
Greece	5	4	1		6				5	21
Spain	17	14		8	11	4				54
France	20	13		7	4	6	1	20	3	74
Croatia	5	2	1	2		1				11
Italy	15	30	2		3	1	15	6	1	73
Cyprus	1	2	1		2					6
Latvia	4	1	1	1		1				8
Lithuania	3	2	1	3		1	1			11
Luxembourg	3	1		1		1				6
Hungary	12	4				2			3	21
Malta	3	3								6
Netherlands	5	3	2	7	3	2		4		26
Austria	5	5		1		3		4		18
Poland	23	5	19				1	2	1	51
Portugal	8	8		1	4					21
Romania	12	15	1	3				1		32
Slovenia	5	1		1		1				8
Slovakia	6	4	3							13
Finland	3	2	2	4	1	1				13
Sweden	4	6		3	1	4	2			20
United Kingdom		20	21	1	1	6	20	1	3	73
Total EU	217	189	74	68	52	51	42	40	18	751

GET TO KNOW THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BETTER VISIT ...

Do you want to find out how the EU's legislative acts are drawn up and adopted? Would you like to know where your MEPs make decisions that affect your daily life?

The European Parliament has set up a number of interactive exhibitions in Brussels and Strasbourg to teach visitors more about the functioning of the institution, its history and the general context of the EU. All the relevant information about these exhibitions can be found on the European Parliament's website (europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/).

STATION EUROPE (BRUSSELS)

Come here to admire our interactive 3D model of the European Parliament and find out about its history, buildings, famous visitors and the various activities on offer. Station Europe is the starting point of your visit to the European Parliament campus.

PARLAMENTARIUM (BRUSSELS)

Let fun and interactive multimedia tools teach you more about the history of European integration and the impact the EU has on our daily lives. The European Parliament's visitor centre is open 7 days a week and no booking is necessary.

ROLE-PLAY FOR SCHOOL GROUPS (BRUSSELS)

Are you aged between 14 and 18? Spend several hours walking in the shoes of an MEP and learn about the EP's decision-making process in an entertaining and innovative way (Monday to Friday; advance bookings only; groups of 16-32 students; activity lasts 2.5 hours).

HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY (BRUSSELS)

Take yourself on a journey through Europe's history and imagine its future. There are several elements that make this museum unique: exhibitions, self-guided multimedia tours, educational resources, workshops and seminars on various topics. Opening in May 2017.

ESPLANADE SOLIDARNOŚĆ 1980 (BRUSSELS)

More than 40 events organised by the European institutions and other organisations take place on the Esplanade each year. Don't forget to check the programme and make sure to spend a few moments there relaxing, admiring the architecture or soaking up the atmosphere of the European Parliament.

INDIVIDUAL CHAMBER TOURS (BRUSSELS AND STRASBOURG)

Discover the Brussels Chamber using one of our multimedia guides, which are available in any of the EU's 24 official languages. No booking is necessary.

Would you like to see one of our debates unfold? Watch a plenary session in Strasbourg or Brussels from the visitors' gallery. There is no need to book in advance, but places are limited.

GROUP VISITS TO PARLIAMENT (BRUSSELS AND STRASBOURG)

Book a group visit (minimum 10 people, Monday to Friday) and watch a fascinating presentation by one of our speakers on Parliament's role and activities. A visit to either the Brussels or Strasbourg Chamber is included.

EUROSCOLA PROGRAMME (STRASBOURG)

Are your pupils aged between 16 and 18 and from one of the 28 EU Member States? Parliament invites them to take a seat in the Chamber and debate, negotiate, adopt resolutions and learn about the EP's decision-making process in a dynamic and multilingual environment.

PARLIAMENT – NEAR YOU

You can attend information sessions, exhibitions and debates on European issues organised by the Parliament Information Offices located in each Member State.

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